

Subject: NOAA Travel Transmittal 11

Date: April 1, 2002

From: R. J. Dominic

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NOAA Employees

FROM: R. J. Dominic
Director, Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Transmittal Number 11

The attached Travel Transmittal Number 11 provides updated information on convenience checks and debit cards.

On December 28, 2001, the President signed into law S. 1438, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2002. Section 1116 of this law authorizes Federal employees to retain promotional items, including frequent flyer miles, earned on official travel. GSA has issued interim guidance which is posted on the NOAA Travel Office web page.

The following information clarifies GSA guidance on upgrades. You may use frequent traveler benefits to upgrade to premium class accommodations for official travel anytime. There is no special delegation and/or approval required when you use frequent traveler benefits or pay personally for an upgrade to premium class accommodations for official travel. However, **if NOAA is paying for the upgrade to premium class accommodations**, you are still required to meet one of the exceptions listed in the Federal Travel Regulations, 301-10.123 and 301-10.124, and therefore, a special delegation and approval are still required (See NOAA Travel Regulations, 301-2.5(a) - 301-2.5(a)(i)).

The Silver Spring SATO Office will begin closing at 5:00 P.M. Eastern Standard Time effective April 22, 2002 in order to accommodate peak call volumes in the earlier parts of the day.

Please contact Rachael Wivell or Pat Oliver on (301) 413-3060 if you have any questions.

MEMORANDUM FOR: All Holders of the NOAA Travel Handbook

FROM: R. J. Dominic
Director, Finance Office/Comptroller

SUBJECT: Travel Transmittal Number 11

1. Filing Instructions for the NOAA Travel Handbook (NTH).

Replacement pages for your NTH are attached as follows:

Remove

Page 301-51-3 through 301-51-4
dated January 1, 2002

Page 302-12-3
dated August 1, 2001

Insert

Page 301-51-3 through 301-51-5
dated April 1, 2002

Page 302-12-3
dated April 1, 2002

2. Explanation of Changes. The attached pages update guidance on convenience checks and debit cards as well as update information on NOAA's home sale program.

3. File this cover memorandum in the front of the NTH. Clarification or assistance regarding travel policies and/or procedures may be obtained by calling your servicing Administrative Support Center travel office listed below:

WASC - Seattle----- (206) 526-6008
MASC - Boulder----- (303) 497-6199
CASC - Kansas City--- (816) 426-7543 x431
EASC - Norfolk----- (757) 441-6897
NOAA Travel Office-- (301) 413-3060

Attachments

NOAA TRAVEL REGULATION (NTR) CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTERS 300 and 301

Following is a list of pages currently in effect in the NTR. This checksheet is to be used to verify the accuracy of the NTR.

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NOAA TRAVEL REGULATION CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTERS 302 and 306

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DOC TRAVEL REGULATION CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTER 301

Following is a list of pages currently in effect in the DOC Travel Handbook. This checksheet is to be used to verify the accuracy of the DOC Travel Handbook. NOTE: The DOC Travel Handbook, Chapter 301, has not been written in the plain language format and currently does not line up correctly with the Federal and NOAA pages in this new NOAA Travel Handbook (NTH).

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(this part should follow Federal pg 52-5)

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DOC TRAVEL REGULATION CHECKSHEET FOR CHAPTER 301 (continued)

DOC Travel Handbook, Special Transmittal 004, Dated February 25, 2000, was issued without page numbers. File behind FTR according to Part. Pages with multiple parts, e.g., questions and answers from Part 301-51 appear on the same page as 301-52, need to be copied so that each can be filed in their appropriate Part.

Part 301-51

301-51.1 thru 301-51.7

Part 301-52

301-52.17 thru 301-52.23

Part 301-54

301-54.1

Part 301-70

301-70.700 thru 301-70.707

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PART 301-51-PAYING TRAVEL EXPENSES

Subpart A-General

Sec.

- 301-51.1(a) What is the preferred method to procure common carrier transportation?
- 301-51.1(b) How do I pay charges associated with converting foreign currency at an embassy abroad?
- 301-51.2(a) What classes of employees are exempt from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card?
- 301-51.3(a) Who has the authority to request exemptions from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card?
- 301-51.5 How may I pay for official travel expenses if I receive an exemption from the use of the Citibank Government travel card?
- 301-51.8 How does the NOAA office obtain travel advances?
- 301-51.9 Who do I contact to apply for a Citibank Government travel card?

301-51.1(a) What is the preferred method to procure common carrier transportation?

The preferred method to procure common carrier transportation is a centrally-billed account at a Travel Management Center (TMC). In emergency situations when the Citibank Government travel card is used to procure common carrier transportation, you must follow the requirements of *Federal Travel Regulation (FTR)*, 301-10.106(a) - (c). In order to receive full reimbursement, employees are required to annotate the complete account number on the passenger receipt when using the individual Government Citibank travel card to purchase e-tickets.

301-51.1(b) How do I pay charges associated with converting foreign currency at an embassy abroad?

You are required to use your Government Citibank travel card to pay charges for converting foreign currency at an embassy abroad.

301-51.2(a) What classes of employees are exempt from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card?

In addition to the classes of employees exempted in the FTR, and in the Department of Commerce (DOC) Travel Handbook from the mandatory use of the travel charge card, NOAA exempts employees who have a disability that would either limit or prevent them from using a Government Citibank travel card.

Memoranda of request for exemptions from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card for employees with a disability:

- 1) must be substantiated in writing by a competent medical authority;
- 2) must be signed by the Assistant Administrator, Line Office or Director, Staff Office; and
- 3) will be reviewed for approval on a case-by-case basis by the Director, Finance Office/Comptroller.

301-51.3(a) Who has the authority to request exemptions from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card?

Memoranda of request for exemptions from the mandatory use of the Citibank Government travel card must be signed by the Line Office Chief Financial Officer (CFO)/Management and Budget Chief, or Staff Office Director, and be submitted thru the Director, Finance Office/Comptroller, to the NOAA CFO. The NOAA CFO will forward requests to the DOC Chief Financial Officer and Assistant Secretary for Administration for approval. DOC must report all exemptions to General Services Administration (GSA).

NOAA TRAVEL REGULATION

Chapter 301-Travel Allowances

301-51.5(b)

301-51.5 How may I pay for official travel expenses if I receive an exemption from the use of the Citibank Government travel card?

When you receive an exemption from the use of the Government Citibank travel card, you are still expected to procure common carrier transportation on the centrally-billed account within a TMC, and use one of the following methods to pay all other official travel expenses:

(a) Personal funds will be used to pay for official travel expenses for:

- Employees who travel once a year;
- Employees whose travel cards have been canceled because of delinquency or use for non-official purposes; or
- Intermittent, seasonal, or temporary employees who have limited appointments.

NOTE: Travel advances will not be authorized for employees mentioned in 301-51.5(a).

(b) Travel advances are authorized to pay for official travel expenses for:

- Individuals who possess a U.S. bank account traveling on invitational travel. Invitational travelers who are entitled to receive travel advances are limited to 80% of the estimated cash expenses of the travel authorization. Users of Travel Manager will refer to the total advance amount in Block 6 of the Travel Manager authorization default form; or
- Employees with disabilities who were granted an exemption, and new appointees who have to travel with less than 72-hours notice and have not had an opportunity to obtain a Citibank Government travel card. A travel advance form and memoranda of request should be faxed to the Chief, Travel and Purchases Branch, Finance Office, or the Chief, Financial Management Division, of your servicing finance office. In addition, the original travel advance form should be mailed to the servicing finance office for proper documentation.

NOTE: Under emergency circumstances, Citibank Government travel cards can be obtained within 72 hours for NOAA employees.

(c) Convenience checks or debit cards are advances which can be used to pay for official travel expenses for:

- International invitational travelers (IIT) who are foreign citizens traveling on behalf of NOAA and who do not possess a U.S. bank account. IITs may use convenience checks or debit cards to purchase lodging and any miscellaneous expense deemed necessary. Debit cards can be used to withdraw cash from ATMs.

301-51.8 How does the NOAA office obtain travel advances?

The NOAA office can obtain a travel advance one of the following ways:

(a) **Travel Advance:** The NOAA office will submit a travel advance form and a travel authorization to the servicing finance office. The travel advance will be deposited directly to the traveler's bank account within 2 - 3 days (notify your servicing finance office for direct deposit set-up).

(b) **Convenience Check:** The office inviting the IIT will submit a travel advance form and a travel authorization to an imprest fund cashier who can issue a convenience check. Contact your servicing finance office for the location of an imprest fund cashier who can issue convenience checks. The imprest fund cashier will sign the Travel Advance (to indicate payment), note that the advance was paid by convenience check, attach it to the Travel Authorization and forward both documents to the servicing finance office.

(c) **Debit Card:** The office inviting the IIT will predetermine travel costs and prepare a travel authorization and voucher at the same time. The original signed travel authorization and voucher will be submitted to Accounting Operations Division (AOD) or the WASC Financial Management Division at least 1 week prior to the start of travel. Expenses on the travel voucher can be estimated from the expenses authorized on the travel authorization. In addition to these expenses, the travel voucher should include an additional \$15.00 to cover transaction fees which will be deducted directly from the debit card balance when it is used by the traveler for ATM cash withdrawals, balance inquiries, point of sale transactions, and long distance calls.

The AOD and WASC will load the funds, as requested on the travel authorization and voucher, onto the debit card and provide it to the Line/Staff Office point of contact. The Line/Staff Office point of contact will then provide the debit card to the traveler. AOD and WASC will monitor the use of the card and the dates on the travel voucher in order to deactivate the card upon completion of travel. At the completion of travel, AOD and WASC will use the travel voucher to schedule payment to the Department of Treasury contractor which provides the debit cards and the system for issuing and maintaining them. The Line/Staff Office will be charged at the completion of travel for the funds which were actually used by the traveler, not the amount which was loaded on the debit card. AOD and WASC will adjust the travel voucher to show the amount actually spent and provide a copy to the Line/Staff Office.

If the Line/Staff Office determines that the travel will be extended, they should contact AOD or WASC to ensure the debit card is not deactivated on the travel voucher end date. If the Line/Staff Office determines that the traveler will need more funds than originally loaded on the debit card, they should send a reclaim voucher to AOD or WASC to ensure that additional funds are loaded.

Contact either Linda Mervicker on (301) 427-3057, x111 or Shirley Hanna on (301) 427-3056, x159 of the Accounting Operations Division, or Merna Grantham on (206) 526-4426, or Colleen Lee on (206) 526-6203 of the WASC Financial Management Division to obtain debit cards.

301-51.9 Who do I contact to apply for a Citibank Government travel card?

- (a) All Line and Staff Offices, other than NMFS and NWS, will call Jocelyn Griffin for applications, maintenance, and increases, and Ruth Wagerman for delinquencies on (301) 413-3060, fax (301) 413-3066,
- (b) NMFS employees will call Marlena Bowman on (301) 713-1364 x148, fax (301) 713-1441, and
- (c) NWS employees will call Beth Downs on (301) 713-1698 x167, fax (301) 713-0662.

Home Sale Program

302-12.3(c) What is the voucherless home sale process?

- 1) The voucherless home sale process begins with marketing assistance on day one of the listing agreement and concludes with closing of the sale of the home.
- 2) The contractor will make the transferee an offer if a bona fide buyer is not found within 90 days.
- 3) Transferees may choose their own real estate agent or choose from a list of agents provided by the contractor. With either option, the contractor will work with the transferee and real estate agent as directed by the transferee.
- 4) The voucherless home sale program includes the:

Buyer Value Option (BVO): BVO begins on the first day of the transferee's listing agreement through day 60 of the agreement. Once a bona fide buyer is found, the contractor will buy the transferee's home at the sale price agreed upon between the buyer and the transferee. The contractor will then sell the home to the buyer. The transferee does not submit a travel voucher since all closing costs are included in the invoice to NOAA from the contractor. The contractor bills NOAA at 10.99% of the value of the home.

Amended Sale: Amended sale usually follows BVO and begins when appraisals are ordered by the contractor (usually at day 60) and a bona fide buyer is found. Amended sale follows the same process as BVO. The transferee does not submit a travel voucher since all closing costs are included in the invoice to NOAA from the contractor. Under amended sale, the contractor bills NOAA at 12.85% of the value of the home which includes the costs of the appraisals.

Appraised Sale: Appraised sale begins on day 90 if a bona fide buyer is not found. The contractor will make the transferee an offer based on appraisals. The transferee has 60 days to accept or reject the contractor's offer. If the transferee accepts the offer, the contractor will buy the home from the transferee and bill NOAA at 21.85% of the appraised value of the home. The transferee does not submit a travel voucher since all closing costs are included in the invoice to NOAA from the contractor. If the transferee decides to not take advantage of the BVO program, they will market their home on their own for at least 60 days before they are enrolled in the appraised value program.

- 5) The fees paid to the contractor for these programs are subject to annual adjustment.